United Nations S/PV.6739

Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

Provisional

6739th meeting

Thursday, 22 March 2012, 10.05 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Parham	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Briens
	Germany	Mr. Berger
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Portugal	Mr. Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	South Africa	Mr. Crowley
	Togo	Mr. Menan
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2012/160)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2012/160)

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Sierra Leone to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Joseph B. Dauda, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski, Chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Canada, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2012/160, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

I now give the floor Mr. Von der Schulenburg.

Mr. Von der Schulenburg: I am grateful for this opportunity to introduce the Secretary-General's report (S/2012/160) and to brief the Security Council before the end of my assignment to Sierra Leone. Let me therefore start by making some personal remarks.

Sierra Leone is a beautiful country and Sierra Leoneans are lovely and kind people. Wherever I went during my almost four years in Sierra Leone, I felt welcomed and was often struck by the openness and directness of its people, irrespective of whether they were subsistence farmers or traditional leaders in so-called up-country, or whether politicians or intellectuals in the cities. It was also gratifying to see how strong the role of women in Sierra Leonean society is.

In the past, I have often spoken about the exceptional successes Sierra Leone has achieved over the past 10 years and the contributions that its three post-conflict Governments have made — first by the two previous Governments led by former President Kabbah in restoring peace to the country, in rebuilding State institutions and in uniting its deeply traumatized people, and now by the Government led by President Koroma, which is transforming the country economically.

As I leave Sierra Leone, I would like to pay tribute, first of all, to its people for their resilience and their extraordinary ability to forgive and reconcile. Today, victims and perpetrators live side by side in communities all over the country. For anyone who travels through Sierra Leone these days, it would be difficult to imagine the horrors of the civil war that occurred only 10 years ago.

We must recognize that Sierra Leone would not be where it is today without the contributions of its paramount chiefs and other traditional leaders, of its Muslim and Christian religious leaders, of its diverse and active civil society, of its women's organizations, of its often courageous journalists and of the country's artists, above all its musicians.

Sierra Leone benefited from one of the best truth and reconciliation processes, and from a series of independent democratic institutions — such as its Human Rights Commission, its National Electoral Commission, its Political Parties Registration Commission, its Independent Media Commission and its the National Youth Commission, to mention only a few. Let me express here my deepest respect for all their important work.

However, one does not have to search very widely to discover the tremendous trauma that 17 years of one-party rule, 13 military coups and, finally, 11 years of civil war have left behind. I remember the void in Steven's voice, a young electrician, when he spoke of his longing to find his father, who disappeared when he, his mother and his three siblings fled the rebel onslaught. I remember Aisha, now in her 20s,

whose eyes still fill with tears when she speaks in pain of how her family handed her over to rebels in order to save the rest of the family from attack; she was barely 14 years old. I remember Jusu, who is today my security guard, who chose to defend his daughter from being taken by rebel forces and was penalized for it by having both his hands hacked off with a machete. And there are the amputee football players who play on the beaches of Freetown every Saturday, and who will always receive one with their happy songs despite being terribly poor and remaining socially marginalized. Most of them had their limbs cut off when they were small children. There is no bitterness in the country, but there is a lot of human dignity. I will always remember them all with the greatest admiration and a deep sense of humility.

The forthcoming elections in November will be the major test for the country's nascent democracy. Sierra Leone must pass this crucial test in its history without allowing the demons of the past to re-emerge. In that regard, Sierra Leone's political elites bear a heavy responsibility not to let the elections derail Sierra Leone's future. No doubt, most of that responsibility rests on the shoulders of President Koroma and his main challenger for the presidency, Mr. Julius Maada Bio. What they decide and do over the coming months will determine much of the direction that the country will take. There will be times when they will have to put national interest over that of their political parties and over their own political ambitions.

Against that backdrop, reports that the Government imported assault weapons worth millions of dollars in January to equip a recently enlarged paramilitary wing of its police, the Operational Services Division (OSD), are of great concern. Sierra Leone is under no arms embargo. However, given Sierra Leone's progress in establishing peace and security throughout the country and its relatively low crime rate, it is not clear why the police would need such weapons, especially as the shipment, according to a leaked bill of lading, appears to include heavy machine guns and even grenade launchers. I would urge the Government to fully clarify those reports and, if true, to explain the intended use of the weapons.

An enlarged, heavily armed and, allegedly, ethnically imbalanced OSD risks undermining the good work that has been done by the Sierra Leone Police in creating a modern and operationally independent police force that serves the people of Sierra Leone. A people-oriented police was one of the important pillars of the successful security sector reforms after the civil war. Because of the country's painful experience, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had suggested that Sierra Leone abandon all forms of paramilitary police force. Such lessons from the past should be taken more seriously.

There are other worrying signs, such as the attack on the opposition presidential candidate in September of last year, which was followed by an attack by members of the opposition on property of the governing party, the questionable imposition of a three-month ban on all political party rallies, violence surrounding a win by the opposition in by-elections for the Freetown City Council and the recent break-in into a newspaper critical of the Government.

In all of that, the main opposition must be aware that it, too, is entering into the elections with considerable historical baggage. It should therefore help to dispel existing mistrust and allay fears that may linger about any perceived ill intentions. I call on the opposition to be more forthcoming in engaging the Government and to refrain from a politics of boycotting the Parliament and other meetings.

Furthermore, the hardening tone of the political rhetoric is of concern. All sides must refrain from extreme and unsubstantiated accusations. Given Sierra Leone's past, such allegations that either side mobilizes ex-combatants or traditional warriors, such as the Kamajors, are serious matters and should not be taken lightly. True or not, politics is based on perceptions. Such allegations must be laid to rest to prevent them from creating a sense of insecurity. Both sides may consider organizing a multiparty investigation, similar to the approach that was taken in tackling alleged illegal cross-border voter registration along the Liberian border.

The all-important elections will take place in only eight months, and the country would greatly benefit from a number of confidence-building measures. First, the Government and opposition parties must continue to carry out a dialogue and, in the interests of the country as a whole, openly discuss controversial issues that could derail the elections. That must also include face-to-face meetings between President Koroma and his main challenger, Mr. Maada Bio. Senior politicians simply do not have the luxury of stalling such dialogue

because of personal clashes in the past while expecting ordinary Sierra Leoneans to reconcile.

The discussions must be designed to reassure the general public that both the Government and the opposition are working together in creating an atmosphere for the elections that is free from any intimidation and in which each citizen can make his or her own choice without fear of retribution. In that context, the Government should seek to clarify several reports criticizing the role that the Minister of Internal Affairs has allegedly played in various violent clashes. As the Ministry for Internal Affairs is responsible for internal security during the elections, it must have the trust of the general public.

Secondly, all parties should revert to the spirit and letter of the joint communiqué signed on 2 April 2009 between the two main political parties, which was wholeheartedly embraced by the President. That would essentially include three aspects. The first is that the report of the Shears-Moses Commission of Inquiry, which investigated the events that led to the most serious outbreak, in March 2009, of political violence since the end of the civil war, must be issued without any further delay. It has now been two years since the report was submitted to the President. In spite of repeated pledges to publish it, most recently in a meeting the President held with the entire diplomatic corps in October 2011, that has not yet been done.

The second aspect is the establishment of an independent police complaints commission, which was agreed to in the joint communiqué but has now been delayed for three years. I welcome recent indications that the Police Council has taken initial steps. However, if that is to have a calming impact on the November elections, there is no further time to lose.

As part of the Joint Communiqué, President Koroma took the bold decision to turn the Government radio station into a fully independent national public broadcaster, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC). In exchange, all political party radio stations were closed. That move drew much international praise, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon joined the President for the inauguration of the SLBC, in June 2010. Unfortunately, the SLBC has not fulfilled expectations, and bad management practices have begun to impact negatively on the quality and impartiality of its programmes. Recent personnel decisions made so close to the elections raise further questions about the SLBC's political neutrality. I hope that the Government will stick to its courageous decision and help to bring about the necessary adjustments in the board and management of the SLBC that would make it a truly national and independent voice of Sierra Leone.

The third aspect entails all political parties working together in support of the country's electoral management bodies, above all the National Electoral Commission and the Political Parties Registration Commission, and preventing any negative actions that could undermine their credibility in the eyes of the general public.

The revised election law must be approved by Parliament without further delay. I call on all political parties to join hands in the Parliament and approve the revised law by consensus. The revised law has taken into consideration concerns that had been raised regarding the old law. Joint parliamentary approval would send a positive signal to the public that the elections can be held in a calm atmosphere.

Finally, all political leaders should continue supporting various cross-party initiatives, especially now in the heat of the election. I commend here in particular the work of the All Political Parties Youth Association and the All Political Party Women's Association. The first has made inroads in uniting party youth wings to prevent the misuse of youth in fomenting violence, and the second has greatly contributed to raising political awareness for a stronger role for women in politics.

Sierra Leone is not only a lovely country; it also has the potential to be a very rich country. It is well endowed with natural resources and rich in mineral resources; it has large stretches of unused fertile land, one of the world's highest rates of rainfall, a large natural deep-sea harbour and a rich seafront.

But all its riches are also the country's potential curse. The huge investments in the mining industry have raised expectations, but so far have not benefited the wider population. In fact, as a result of high inflation rates, the purchasing power of fixed-income earners and the poor appears to have decreased considerably over the last few years, and no real difference has been made in getting youth engaged in the development of the country. Sierra Leone's persistent poverty levels are a factor that breeds unrest and could undo all the successes of the past.

In the 1960s, South Korea had a lower per capita income than most West African countries. Today it is the tenth largest industrial country in the world. Korean Prime Minister Kim Hwang-sik recently explained the secret behind such success — education, education, and again education. My final advice to Sierra Leone would therefore be for it to invest in education — invest in universal primary and secondary education, invest in technical colleges and invest in universities. Education would help to turn Sierra Leone's natural and mineral wealth into sustainable development. It would help to lift people out of poverty and help to create new opportunities. It would help to reduce unfair income distribution and it could help to maintain a democratic and peaceful society. Freetown was once called the Athens of Africa — why not again?

States Members of the United Nations have invested heavily in Sierra Leone's peaceful future, both in blood and treasure. On a per capita basis, Sierra Leone has probably received more funding for peacekeeping and peacebuilding than any other country in the world. That is the international community's investment, and we all have to make sure that that investment pays a rich dividend. Sierra Leone has the potential to become a success story, but it will need the continued support and vigilance of the Security Council — especially at this time of elections. For the benefit of Sierra Leone, but also in our own interest, we have to see this effort through.

Let me end here by thanking the Secretary-General for his confidence in me and the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Lynn Pascoe, for all his support. I would like to thank the Chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Rishchynski, for his interest in the country and his support. I have enjoyed working with my colleagues from the diplomatic corps and the development group in Freetown and thank them for their confidence. My very special thanks go, of course, to my colleagues in the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone and the United Nations country team, who have been so supportive to me. I thank them for their commitment to the future of Sierra Leone and to the principles of the United Nations. I would like especially to mention here my Sierra Leonean colleagues who have remained loyal to the Organization even at difficult times.

But, above all, let me thank all Sierra Leoneans for having welcomed me in their midst and for having given me three and a half lovely years in their country. I miss the smiles and warmth of Sierra Leoneans, I miss the regular breakfasts with the country's politicians, I miss the discussions at the round table at the Palaver Hut, and I also miss the regular tête-à-tête meetings that I had with President Koroma.

It would not be truthful if I did not admit that I also miss the spicy cassava leaves, the beautiful beaches and a good game of tennis at Hill Station, where there was a primary school next door with children's laughter floating in the background. I will miss Kpaka, Stevens, Jusu and Obama, my gardener.

Let me wish Mama Salone the very best for its future and hope that the Almighty protects and guides the country and its people. After so many difficult years, Sierra Leoneans deserve a brighter, prosperous and peaceful future.

The President: I thank Mr. von der Schulenburg for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Rishchynski.

Mr. Rishchynski (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to take the floor.

In late January, I travelled to Sierra Leone to take stock of progress on peacebuilding. Let me express my gratitude for the warm welcome, strong support and frank engagement of all national and international interlocutors. Drawing on the findings of that visit, this morning I would like to offer advice on three important issues for Sierra Leone, namely, the forthcoming elections, regional challenges to peacebuilding, and the transition process that will take place in the country.

First, technical and financial preparations for the elections are on track. At the same time, there is a clear need to encourage more open dialogue, both among the political parties and with the national electoral institutions. It is also crucial to better convince the public that all relevant stakeholders will behave in a professional and responsible manner. Political leaders have a particular responsibility to demonstrate their commitment to free, fair and peaceful political competition, including collectively through interparty mechanisms and at public events. As electoral campaigning begins in earnest, all parties must

redouble their efforts to implement their commitments under the joint communiqué of 2009.

The international community has a clear and constructive role to play in support of the electoral process. Sierra Leone's partners should respond favourably to the Government's requests for electoral observers. The United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) must continue to have a unique legitimacy and mandate with respect to enabling a favourable political environment. That should be the mission's immediate priority as we approach the elections. The Security Council and the wider United Nations system should stand ready to provide any necessary support to UNIPSIL's efforts.

In that respect, the configuration looks forward to working closely with Mr. von der Schulenburg's successor, because the departure of Mr. von der Schulenburg has created an unfortunate vacuum. The configuration encourages the Secretary-General to fill that position as quickly as possible. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend Mr. von der Schulenburg's strong leadership and the considerable contribution he made during his years of service in Sierra Leone. At the personal level, I would like to say that it is a pity that he will not have the opportunity to see the conclusion of that excellent work.

(*spoke in English*)

The Security Council has recently focused more closely on transnational threats to peace and security. That is a welcome development, but much more is needed. Sierra Leone has taken impressive steps towards fighting transnational crime, yet it is hampered by the slower pace of progress elsewhere in the subregion. Stronger and more outcome-oriented engagement with regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States, as well as increased support for regional programmes such as the West Africa Coast Initiative, is very much needed. The United Nations Office for West Africa plays a vital role in those issues and warrants continued strong support from the Council.

Thirdly, Sierra Leone will face two transitions — one that is shifting from end-stage peacebuilding to a focus on longer-term development, while at the same time the Security Council may wish to consider drawing down UNIPSIL following successful elections later this year. Those processes need to be handled with great care. The United Nations, with strong leadership from UNIPSIL, has developed an innovative and integrated approach — a best practice in the truest sense of that term. Successful mechanisms should be retained and any transition designed to produce minimal shocks to existing practices. Some of the functions currently performed by UNIPSIL will need to be replaced by reinforcing other aspects of the country team. Similarly, Sierra Leone will continue to face significant development challenges and some of the underlying causes of conflict will linger until long-term economic development truly takes hold.

International support must, in our judgment, reflect those realities, and the Peacebuilding Commission will shortly begin considering how its own engagement should evolve as part of that transitional process. The configuration will report back to the Security Council in due course.

In closing, let me note that Sierra Leone has made tremendous progress since the end of its civil war. It is one of the success stories of United Nations peacebuilding. Yet the process is not quite finished, as repeated incidents of political violence over the past year have demonstrated. The Security Council should continue to pay close attention to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and stand prepared to offer any necessary support. The Peacebuilding Commission will do the same by working in close partnership with all relevant national and international stakeholders towards meeting that goal.

The President: I thank Mr. Rishchynski for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative to His Excellency Mr. Joseph B. Dauda, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Dauda (Sierra Leone): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March and by thanking you, first, for having convened this meeting on the situation in Sierra Leone and, secondly, for giving my delegation the opportunity to contribute to this debate. Let me also express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his detailed report on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) for the period of 1 September 2011 to 29 February 2012 (S/2012/160).

I convey on behalf of His Excellency President Ernest Bai Koroma, the Government and the people of Sierra Leone profound appreciation for the relentless support and active interest of the United Nations and friends of Sierra Leone in consolidating peace and security in the country. Permit me to single out in this regard the strong leadership and commitment that the Canadian Chair continues to demonstrate in the pursuit of peace and security in Sierra Leone, as amply evidenced by Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski during his recent visit to Sierra Leone. Our thanks also go to the outgoing Executive Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone and Head of UNIPSIL, Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, for his role in the consolidation of peace and security and for maximizing the gains of our post-conflict development efforts.

The report seeks to reflect developments in Sierra Leone, including progress made so far and the challenges faced since September 2011. As we commend ourselves for the gains made through the joint efforts of the Government and people of Sierra Leone, the United Nations and the international community, it is crucial that together we resolve to tackle the remaining challenges in order to consolidate comprehensively the gains made.

President Ernest Bai Koroma remains committed to the consolidation of peace, security and sustainable development, as mapped out in our Agenda for Change. As noted in the report, the Government has made steady progress in addressing the three risks of youth unemployment, corruption and illicit drug trafficking and organized crime, identified in the Agenda for Change and endorsed by the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission in its outcome document of September 2009.

The Government has demonstrated strong political will in dealing with issues of political violence, in whatever shape or form and irrespective of party affiliation, and will continue to use legal instruments to bring perpetrators of violence to justice. That was clearly demonstrated when the Government took action in respect of the political violence in Bo, in the Southern province of Sierra Leone, involving the presidential candidate of the main opposition party, which I referred to in my statement to the Council in September 2011 (S/PV.6609).

The presidential, parliamentary and local council elections scheduled for 17 November 2012 indeed remain a crucial test for peace and democratic consolidation in the country. President Ernest Bai Koroma will continue to constantly engage all stakeholders, in particular the opposition parties, with a view to enhancing political dialogue and collective commitment to peaceful, free, fair, transparent and credible elections. The Government is currently considering the report of the Shears-Moses Commission of Inquiry into the March 2009 disturbances and will soon release a white paper on the recommendations of the Commission. We therefore urge the United Nations and all our development partners to continue to give their full support to the ongoing electoral process.

The Government, in promoting women's participation in the decision-making process in line with the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has been working with United Nations entities and various women's groups, including the Women's Social Support Group, in drafting a gender equality bill that will soon be presented to Parliament. The Government continues to make progress towards the education of the girl child and the provision of free health care to pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five. The Government will continue to promote human rights issues in accordance with our national interest.

The Government's commitment to democratic governance and the maintenance of the independence of our democratic institutions, such as the National Electoral Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission, the Independent Media Commission and civil society organizations remains undiminished. The Government will soon take the necessary steps to establish an independent police complaints committee. The independence of the judiciary has always been a feature of our democratic governance, and the Government will continue to maintain the inbuilt checks and balances provided for in the Constitution. The National Electoral Commission has duly taken ownership of the electoral process by playing a leading role in the biometric voter registration process and in the review and reform of the electoral laws. The Government recognizes the important role of the Independent Media Commission in regulating the conduct of the media and will

continue to provide support to assist the Commission in effectively performing its functions.

It is acknowledged that Sierra Leone is a success story in peacebuilding and we therefore renew our call on the international community to continue to invest in success in the spirit of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, adopted in Busan, Republic of Korea, and to recognize the need for special attention to be paid to countries emerging from conflict.

In conclusion, I wish to confirm that the Government, recognizing the 2012 elections as a litmus test for our peace and democratic governance consolidation, is taking all necessary steps to ensure that the elections will be peaceful, free, fair, transparent and credible.

The President: I thank Mr. Dauda for his statement.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.